

“It may not get better, but we can certainly get even. And it is in this struggle we can find the joy of living a life on our own terms.”



**Letter
to a
Gender
Rebel**

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by a friend

into fixing the system that has created all of our misery and been designed to exploit us. They take away our power to act, to control our own lives and to make lives we want to live together.

If our victimhood and our isolation is all we share, then we have lost already. But for those of us who share a desire to refuse to play their games and their proper roles, in is in the course of fighting back against this society that we will find each other, and truly never be alone. It won't get better; there is no future for us in this society. Even better of a reason to tear it apart and take what we need. Every time one of us beats the shit out of a basher, steals money to buy all of our friends the hormones they need, or glues the locks of racist or transphobic business that fired us, we have showed each other that the destruction of the world that makes us miserable is possible, we have built a connection and shown each other that we are not alone. There is no separation between taking back our ability to survive and destroying the world that has stopped us from living in the first place. It's entirely possible that we won't succeed, but I want us to build this struggle together. I want us to find the friends that we can choose to act with now to better our lives. Most of all I want us to see the smiles on each other's faces when we see that someone has gotten away with striking a blow or getting what they need. It is these kinds of happiness that threatens this world when they are shared and spread because they build our own power and reveal the possibilities of our love. *It may not get better, but we can certainly get even.* And it is in this struggle we can find the joy of living a life on our own terms. I cannot wait to see the ways in which you will rebel, my friend, but no matter what, know that in this rebellion you will never be alone.

**With so much love for you,
and so much hatred for everything stands in our way,**

a friend.

**“The best revenge is not living well.
The best revenge is revenge.”**

-Margaret Cho

To everyone still learning to live and struggle as a gender rebel in this society,

I write you this letter with little knowledge of the specific complexities of your life. How could I? There is no one way in which to experience the overwhelming pain of society's obsession over keeping you hostage in the tiny gender boxes we nervously check on every form we've ever had to fill out. There is no single experience that can describe us all, nothing essential that we hold in common other than the violence that has been imposed on us for failing to meet the proper standards of manhood and womanhood. This society is based on these gendered distinctions, upon fiercely policing these social roles and making sure that they recreate themselves every day in each of our lives. Man, woman, cis, trans. These labels are used to make us understand the way we must behave for this world to keep functioning the way it does: to maintain a social calm that hides the truth that most of us are being exploited for economic profit or cast aside for not being productive enough. Our lives don't fit so neatly into those little gender boxes and identity categories; we are threatened, attacked, and terrorized into showing all of the complexity in our lives into nondescript category that is supposed to tell us how to behave. But for those of us who refuse to be reduced to these words and rebel against these roles, we find ourselves the target of a seemingly endless flow of violence coming from a society that doesn't want our complicated lives and even more complicated desires to get in the way of their authority.

There are a million unique ways in which we experience this violence. Some of us are cis gay boys in high school that long for just one day in which they aren't given looks or mocked for being too much of a faggot. Others are trans women that have to hustle hard every day because of a 50% unemployment rate for us. Some aren't boys or girls, neither or both; some are two-spirit and barely surviving on a government-neglected reservation. Though we have such different lives sometimes, such different ways in which we have felt the sting of a society that never cared to begin with, I don't want what we share to merely be the bruises from a violent john, the tormented memories from high school bullies or the sedate feeling of having drunk ourselves to drunk to stop feeling anything. I don't want what we have in common to be our page in the obituaries or a study on teen suicide this year. I do, however, want us to be able to examine each of these moments, and see how they are connected to the bigger picture of societal violence that is used to maintain those little gender boxes. Every time someone has yelled "*dyke!*" out of the window of a car at one

of us, every time one of us binds our chests to feel more comfortable in their own skin, every day we wake up not wanting to live is connected, and so are all of these moments with the violence faced by so many of us for our racial appearance, the ways in which our different body parts function, and our refusal to play their fucked-up games to get ahead. The social order of this world is based on perpetuating this relationships of power; the prisons, police, families, schools, workplaces, they all exist to maintain the ways in which this cruelty is profitable.

In the face of overwhelming violence, ecological collapse, ever-expanding police and prisons, they have tried to reiterate over and over a single sentence to fill all of the emptiness we feel:

it gets better.

*"Don't worry, once you're out of high school,
all of this will disappear..."*

"It's okay, once you get on estrogen you'll stop feeling like this."

"It gets better once you are old enough to go to gay bars.."

Despite their assurances, many of us have never felt at home in this world, nor any hope for its future. We are made to feel separated and isolated from each other and think we have no power. It is tempting to see ourselves as merely victims of a cruel world and accept we are helpless in the face of all of this violence. Throughout my life there have been so many days that I thought giving up just made sense, as I shed tears over so many things: when I was bullied until I wanted to die, the first time I was sexually assaulted, when other trans people decided I was not "real" enough. Perhaps sometimes I have even wanted to believe that it somehow might magically just "get better." It hasn't though, at least not yet. But the truth is that both seeing ourselves as victims and perhaps waiting forever for the world to just get better for us is just another thing we've been taught to keep us under control. Just as society tries to hide the violence it throws upon us, it also tries to provide us false solutions to our problems. They come in so many forms too: the idea that suffering is morally superior and that violence against your oppressors is just as bad as the violence that is inflicted on us every day, the gay ICE agent that deports our lovers and friends to prove his true "American-ness", the trans lobbyist that wants us to buy into the system that destroys our lives, the non-profits that just want a few more scraps from the master's table. These are all false solutions-- they want us to invest our energies